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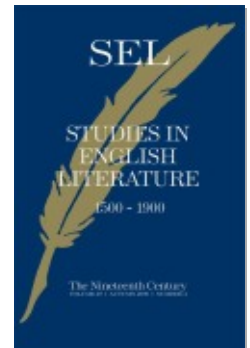
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Dickens's Little Red Riding Hood and Other Waterside Characters

MOLLY CLARK HILLARD

"A Christmas Tree" is a *Household Words* article dedicated to the simultaneous delights and horrors of memory. Writing in December of 1850, Charles Dickens recollects the early influences upon his imagination, in the form of toys, tales, books, pantomime characters, and historical figures. Halfway through this essay written halfway through his career (one might say at the very heart of Dickens) lie the remains of a boyhood passion for a fairy-tale child: "She was my first love. I felt that if I could have married Little Red Riding-Hood, I should have known perfect bliss. But, it was not to be; and there was nothing for it but to look out the Wolf in the Noah's Ark there, and put him late in the procession on the table, as a monster who was to be degraded."¹ The reminiscence portrays Little Red Riding Hood as a lost object of desire. Dickens-the-boy is cheated of his love by the "monster" who devours her. More particularly, Dickens's first stirrings of romantic love quickly become an enunciation of sexual competition between boy and wolf, in which the boy loses, and the girl is lost. What ought to have been a pure, childish union becomes a narrative of fallen womanhood. This essay demonstrates how the folktale "Little Red Riding Hood," with its varied themes of pursuit, shameful knowledge, and violent ends, offered Dickens a folkloric figure in which to dress the endlessly titillating and affecting Victorian story of endangered virtue. I first introduce Dickens's interest in this story and in the uses of enchantment more broadly into the larger critical framework of Victorian nos-

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talgia. I draw upon scholarship that treats Victorian notions of a "lost past"—a prior way of being that is mourned but ultimately discarded in favor of "civilized" discourse—whether that past is rendered in economic, moral, or artistic terms.² Yet though Dickens characterizes his passion for Riding Hood as "not to be," this putting aside of childish but possibly not innocent desire and possession is only temporary. Importantly, though little Charles Dickens "degrades" the wolf as a "monster," he does not exclude him from the ark but only defers his entrance. The wolf has his uses: the death of Red Riding Hood is both dreadful and instructive for the boy who would become a writer.

In fact, by 1850 Little Red Riding Hood was a recurrent imaginative figure for the author; in signaling her loss across his *oeuvre*, he paradoxically resurrects her again and again. Notably, the wolf in Dickens's childhood is associated with engulfing waters from the first. The devoured girl is here linked, however obliquely, to the drowned woman and points toward Dickens's running narrative of fallen women and their drowning, real or imagined, in the river Thames.³ The sexual freight of the fairy-tale heroine is not Dickens's invention: over its five-hundred-year history, "Little Red Riding Hood" has ever been a tale about the ravaging of unsupervised girls. As it moves into Dickens's urban center, it also becomes a tale about the predations of poor girls in a market economy.

To demonstrate this movement, I show how Dickens's long meditation upon the story came to a crisis in *Our Mutual Friend* (1865). I rearticulate the fragments of "Little Red Riding Hood" scattered through *Our Mutual Friend* and insert them into the critical conversation about Dickens's working-class master plots. Crucial economic readings cite the various devouring forces in the novel; yet no discussion locates among these forces the threads of "Little Red Riding Hood" that wind through the text. To do so is to confront the fact that Dickens's most notable portrayal of Red Riding Hood is effected through the ravaging Rogue Riderhood, himself swallowed in the end by the river Thames. As with so many other re-articulations in the novel, then, assembling the folktale produces not a whole and easily readable narrative but a derangement of what we thought was a familiar story of a maiden's pursuit by a monster. These fragmented and redistributed elements generate a reading of the tale in which the wolf and girl are one and the same. And yet it is vital to begin by noting a certain slipperiness between wolf and girl within the fairy tale as well. As Philip Lewis notes, though the questioning give-and-take

in bed ("what big teeth you have") rehearses the wolf's otherness from the girl, the wolf's intention in devouring her ("the better to eat you with") is to elide that difference, to deny her repetition of "you are not me."⁴ To *be* in the wolf is to *become* the wolf. This recognition necessitates a closer look at Dickens's toying with the ark: the wolf in that "procession" should by rights have a female companion. Dickens does not invoke the Biblical mating of "two of every sort . . . after their kind," and the implication is that it is Red Riding Hood herself who has become amalgamated with the wolf, an unholy matrimony to contrast Dickens's imagined "perfect bliss."⁵ I shall show that Dickens's conflation of his lost ideal with wolfish consumption makes sense within the Victorian literary construct of fallen womanhood, in which the woman is always depicted as that great paradox, a creature who has succumbed to appetite—her seducer's and her own—who, having consumed, is herself consumed. Dickens's whisper of a love that abides and yet is not to be, together with the ark, that great metonymic signifier of the Flood and its simultaneous destruction and restoration of life—this brief moment in *Household Words* looks ahead to Dickens's speculation upon nostalgia and the literary value of folklore in his last novel, in which the author recognizes that to decry the commercial value of girls is itself commercially valuable and that to mourn the death of Riding Hood is eternally to resurrect her body.

As I have indicated, this essay joins the body of criticism that identifies "nostalgia" as the complicated result of imagining a *necessarily* buried past. For instance, Carolyn Steedman charges that "the investigation of the forms of human culture (in what is now known as Anthropology) implied a material progression in human lives, which increased in symbolic importance during the course of the century, whereby that which was traversed (the course of an individual life; the growth through childhood to maturity; the development of a people or a nation) was, in the end, left behind and abandoned."⁶ It has been my contention elsewhere that folklore should be similarly located in this progressive rhetoric; tales represented for the nineteenth century the dearly beloved remnants of "that which was traversed."⁷

For instance, in book 5 of *The Prelude*, published in 1850, William Wordsworth praises the "powers" of folk narratives and their anonymous creators:

That I should here assert their rights, attest
Their honours, and should, once for all, pronounce

Their benediction: speak of them as Powers
For ever to be hallowed.

(lines 217–20)⁸

However, he declines to draw upon them:

at least,
It might have well beseemed me to repeat
Some simply fashioned tale, to tell again,
In slender accents of sweet Verse, some tale
That did bewitch me then, and soothes me now.

(lines 175–9)

Though it “*might* have well beseemed” Wordsworth “to repeat / Some simply fashioned tale,” he evidently concludes that “to tell again” is too “slender” a task for his *Prelude*. Like Wordsworth, many other literary artists approached folk narrative as an opportunity to reflect back upon a developmental stage. The adult inevitably loses his first, emotional response to his nurse’s stories, nineteenth-century authors felt; both the tales and their loss are necessary to proper development. Like childhood itself, the folklore experienced in childhood provided the essential foundations for the imagination, but it was equally essential that folklore be associated with a puerile past to signal one’s arrival in the realm of mature artistry. Vladimir Propp characterized the function of folklore as occupying a nexus between personal, national, and artistic pasts: “Folklore is the womb of literature . . . Folklore is the prehistory of literature . . . Literature, which is born of folklore, soon abandons the mother that reared it.”⁹ While Propp is writing in 1928, he draws on an evolutionary model of folklore that absolutely began in the Victorian period. Reflecting back upon the Romantic relationship to origins—of tales as the abandoned old wives of artistic endeavor, of folklore recording primitive, even savage, nationhood—many Victorian authors differentiated the material of folklore from the material of “modernity.” When Dickens says his love of Little Red Riding Hood “was not to be,” he signals the loss of folklore, remembered as a “hallowed” source of imagination.

And it is important to note the paradox there. Helen Groth sees the production of nostalgia as “symbolic currency,” and she summarizes Susan Stewart’s argument that “nostalgia is a constitutive part of the process of reading, viewing, and imagining

our own relation to both the past and the present.”¹⁰ As I have argued elsewhere, “There is . . . a clear market value in associating folklore with nostalgia. Collections of folklore sold in part because the idea of modernity—the notion that the reader participates in a progressive present, one that includes literacy—sells.” Yet this means that including elements of folklore in works of literary and visual art that were deeply invested in England’s social identity brought “folklore quite literally into currency.”¹¹ Though the “first love” folklore appears to have been swallowed, it is, rather, an endlessly renewable resource. Oddly, though, Dickens publicly disavowed the social currency of folklore—at least in the hands of other authors. In “Frauds on the Fairies” (1853), Dickens excoriates fairy tales altered and manipulated for political aims (most especially George Cruikshank’s recent volume of temperance tales). Claiming the innate innocence of folklore, he concludes, “The world is too much with us, early and late. Leave this precious old escape from it, alone.”¹² In this nod to Wordsworth, Dickens signals a Romantic separation of past and present, serious and slender reading. One might point out that, Alice-like, Dickens gave himself advice but very seldom followed it. Considering his own, well-documented, folkloric tinkering, Dickens’s insistence upon the absolute division between worldly horrors and folkloric fancy rings false.¹³

I situate this argument in the discourse surrounding Dickensian realism and, indeed, Victorian realism more broadly.¹⁴ Recent years have seen an intensified interest in questions of genre but coupled with a poststructuralist insistence upon both generic instability within the novel form and generic cross-pollination between various elements of Victorian culture. Much of this critical discussion turns upon the question of how various authors, including Dickens, imagine the mushrooming urban center. Robert Alter has coined the phrase “experiential realism” to describe “the novel as a searching response to the felt new reality of the European city.” In London, “an overabundance of sensory stimuli . . . was compounded . . . by a feeling of being dwarfed by the cityscape and sometimes menaced by the material products of compacted urban existence.”¹⁵ Julian Wolfreys argues that, in the early part of Victoria’s reign, London began to be “perceived as a modern city. London of the nineteenth century assumes a central importance to the world and in the minds not only of its inhabitants but of people everywhere . . . Certainly, London becomes more than merely ‘real.’” For Wolfreys, London was not simply a setting for early to midcentury fiction, but an integral part of

the narrative itself, as important, and as imagined, as character or plot. A modern city, it yet had something about it that begged the figural. According to Wolfreys, because London altered and expanded at an alarming rate, literary artists found control by imposing upon it "hidden squares and 'darkened courts'" and, in the face of constant change, an identity "out of time suggesting the eternal."¹⁶ Alter acknowledges that "[m]any readers have noticed a fairy-tale perspective in Dickens's writing by virtue of which monsters, ogres, and other supernatural creatures suddenly manifest themselves, usually through the agency of figurative language, in the most mundane contemporary settings."¹⁷ Indeed, *Little Red Riding Hood* seems to be located among the harshest realities of this unreal (or more than real) city. When she enters the urban scene, she is made into an emblem of literary artists' ideas about labor and lost innocence in London. If Dickens's city is a deconstructed space, his now-legendary response to it as "the attraction of repulsion" is equally vexed.¹⁸ I have already noted folklore's similar powers to attract and repulse; I contend that these contrasting threads of folklore are woven into the metropolitan fabric. Robert Newsom has adduced that the author "imposes upon the reader a kind of unsettled and unsettling double perspective which requires us to see things as *at once* 'romantic' and 'familiar.'"¹⁹ Such criticism prompts my conclusion that real and unreal plots merge in Dickens's London in order to confront what Groth calls the "relation to both the past and the present."

I would argue that the discrepancy between what Dickens proclaimed and what he practiced has deterred sufficiently complex criticism of his uses of folkloric plots. Like many other Victorian authors and artists, Dickens deflects the mimetic power of the uncanny in his own novels. As a result, criticism tends to take these fantastic elements of Dickens and Dickens's protestations about them at face value. That is, others have noted the proliferation of the folkloric in Dickens's work, but most critics ultimately conclude that such plots are employed merely to elicit a nostalgic *frisson*, which is to say, recollections of an undifferentiated childhood imagination irreconcilable with his realism. Even Alter, having noted Dickens's "fairy-tale perspective," concludes, "I would prefer to give that notion a little more edge by suggesting that Dickens repeatedly exercises a faculty of *archaic vision* in which what meets the eye in the contemporary scene triggers certain primal fears and fantasies, archaic vision becoming the medium through which we are led to see the troubling meanings of the new urban reality." Alter, who dedicates an entire work to

exploring the mutual encroaching of fantasy and realism, ties himself into semantic knots in order to disavow Dickens's folkloric plots. When once untangled from the undifferentiated heap of "monsters, ogres, and other supernatural creatures" into which critics routinely collapse these plots, Dickens's "fairy-tale perspective" has all the "edge" that one could desire. Perhaps Alter's paradox can be explained in his subsequent commentary: "The originality and fecundity of his metaphoric imagination constitute one of the chief reasons that he [Dickens] is a law unto himself as a novelist, with no really convincing imitators . . . Dickens's metaphors and similes are vividly original, often startling, and give the impression of having been struck off in the white heat of improvisation."²⁰ Alter, like so many other critics, seeks to preserve Dickens's originality; to accept that the author deliberately, painstakingly, appropriated mature narratives long in existence apparently threatens that idyll. To imagine him rather tapping into some primal fount of inchoate emotion, driven there purely by his own scorching vision, preserves the cult of literary genius. This sort of conclusion reifies the Romantic burial of folklore. In other words, we have been wont to read Dickens's use of folk narrative in spite of, not in terms of, his social politics.²¹ By contrast, I contend that, belying his own irritable response to Cruikshank, fantastic narratives not only inhabit but also supply the language of Dickens's social realism.

How, then, does Little Red Riding Hood—a rural miss navigating through the woods—arrive in town? Both Michael Kotzin and Cynthia DeMarcus have cited Dickens's correspondence with a German author that demonstrates his familiarity with the tale. This letter suggests that, while he was aware of a happier ending, Dickens imagined his "first love" to be always already lost: "Little Red Cap, under the name of little Red Riding Hood, is a very old English story—a hundred years old, at the least, I should say. But the cutting open of the Wolf by the Hunter, and the restoration of Little Red Cap to life, which is no part of the English story, seems familiar to me, as if I had read it before."²² To Dickens, the recovery of this girl is "no part of the English story"; however, there were plenty of British adaptations of the story that did spare the girl. Dickens therefore claims as the national standard the seventeenth-century version by Charles Perrault, the first in which the girl is devoured. As I have indicated, a tacit eroticism marked the "Little Red Riding Hood" tale from its inception; the narrative has always been a cautionary tale, the various versions of which record an adolescent girl's struggles to fend off a would-

be seducer or rapist. But while the story has always been bawdy, it has not always been tragic. In the early seventeenth-century French version, "The Story of Grandmother," a werewolf (or *bzou*) disguises himself as the heroine's grandmother.²³ He lures the girl into bed, telling her to burn her clothes as she "won't be needing them anymore."²⁴ Once in bed with the *bzou*, she recognizes her mistake and, feigning a sudden need to defecate, she tricks the werewolf into letting her outside. In this comparatively triumphant version, the girl escapes with life and virtue intact.

In Charles Perrault's "Le Petite Chaperon Rouge" (1697), however, shame and degradation attached to the story for the first time. It is Perrault who invented the heroine's *chaperon*. A small, ornamental headdress of velvet or satin, it would have been an unlikely coiffure for a cottager. And indeed, Perrault makes clear that the garment is a gift from a doting grandmother to a spoiled favorite. The red garment and the heroine's demise are the most characteristic elements of Perrault's tale. In this version, with the final call and response, "'What big teeth you have!' 'The better to eat you with,'" the wolf "leap[s] upon Little Red Riding Hood" and devours her.²⁵

In the Grimms' 1812 version, "Rotkapchen" (the version upon which Dickens and his correspondent reflected), a wolf eats both grandmother and girl, as in the Perrault version. The Grimms added a hunter (or woodcutter) to their story, who cuts the child and grandmother from the sleeping wolf's belly and ushers in an element of paternalistic rebirth, discipline, and punishment (meted to girl and grandmother as much as to wolf).²⁶ As a result of alterations by Perrault and the Grimms, by the nineteenth century the girl had become a cautionary lesson of fallen womanhood, her red cap shamefully emblematic.

It is in eighteenth-century England that the tale acquired the title "Little Red Riding Hood." The heroine in "The Story of Grandmother" has no identifying garment; the *chaperon* and *kapchen* are stylish caps of velvet or satin, and neither word quite signifies the riding habit that the English translation invents for the girl. Robert Samber translated the Perrault tale into English in 1729, and it is he who first termed the garment a "riding hood." I would argue that the English title solidifies a class position previously lurking in the margins of the tale. Morna Daniels argues that the riding hood was "worn by all classes, and not just for riding";²⁷ the OED, however, defines it as "a large hood originally worn while riding, but in later use forming an article of out-door costume for women and children." Catherine Orenstein suggests that the women and

children who wore this garment were not the daughters of farm laborers, gamekeepers, or woodcutters, but members of the middle classes.²⁸ But whether or not a peasant girl might have plausibly worn a riding hood, I would argue that the nineteenth century perceived the irony of a *riding* hood bestowed upon a girl obliged to *walk*. Nearly all Victorian incarnations of “Little Red Riding Hood” that I examined were written by authors living in London; taken together, these texts labor to make Little Red Riding Hood a child—or at least a girl—of the London streets. Authors adopt the narrative to show the way in which pure things become defiled in the city, and yet, paradoxically, to these authors Little Red Riding Hood is a girl always already lost—doomed before she sets foot in the metropolis. How does Little Red Riding Hood arrive in London? Like other working-class girls journeying to London, she arrives on foot, with a bundle under her arm.

Steedman’s explanation of Mignon as a “figure,” the textual girl standing for the actual, is especially useful here: “She was a word, and Goethe took her and made the word—not flesh, but a figure . . . As a figure, she was used for the purposes of personification, to give a name and a face (and a body: a deformed and damaged body) to abstract ideas and bodies of theories, particularly theories of childhood and development, and other, less articulate desires felt about childhood and children. But she stayed a word as well—an old word for new meanings.”²⁹ Little Red Riding Hood is equally “an old word for new meanings,” an iconic name and costume that could represent an endangered body in the metropolis. It therefore makes sense that the story of a girl beset by wolves, when taken up by artists steeped in London news, might take on the hue of current events. Like Steedman, Catherine Robson foregrounds unresolved anxieties of “the glaring disparity between the construct of idealized girlhood, and the depiction of girlhood as a lived experience for the working class.”³⁰ She demonstrates that the central image of the exploited girl child in the 1840s was a midlands miner or collier, but after the 1885 publication of William Stead’s exposé *Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon*, it was a London prostitute. If the girl’s body was a laboring body, a defiled body, or merely a hungry body, it could not simultaneously be inscribed with an innocent middle-class past. Similarly, I argue that Dickens’s use of “Little Red Riding Hood” describes an urban working-class girlhood that was implicitly dangerous because implicitly ungirlish. I find Little Red Riding Hood in London to signify childhood’s end in “the mart of the world” but simultaneously to register the subtle

ways that folklore always already resists standing for an unsullied English childhood.³¹

Dickens's memory of his "first love" became foundational for his highly successful master plot of fallen girls and their smooth, plausible seducers. Dickens replayed oblique versions of Little Red Riding Hood's fall with a series of predatory pairings: Nancy and Sikes (who is more feral than his dog), Alice and Carker (who is all teeth), and Little Em'ly and Steerforth. David Copperfield's boyhood passion for his social inferior Little Em'ly is especially reminiscent of the love that was "not to be." David describes a childhood moment in which Em'ly foreshadows her own sexual future by a headlong dash toward the ocean: "There has been a time since when I have wondered whether, if the life before her could have been revealed to me at a glance . . . and if her preservation could have depended on a motion of my hand, I ought to have held it up to save her."³² Martha, the fallen woman quite literally shadowing Little Em'ly throughout the novel, has a similarly watery interlude by the Thames, where she stands "[a]s if she were a part of the refuse it had cast out, and left to corruption and decay" before David snatches her from a suicidal plunge: "I know it's like me!" she exclaimed. "I know that I belong to it. I know that it's the natural company of such as I am! It comes from country places, where there was once no harm in it—and it creeps through the dismal streets, defiled and miserable . . . I can't keep away from it . . . It's the only thing in all the world that I am fit for, or that's fit for me" (*DC*, pp. 626–7). As Robson has noted, "[T]he river, and more specifically the River Thames, is always the place of the prostitute's suicide, or at the least, her suicidal thoughts . . . Dickens repeatedly presents us with images of the desperate harlot either on the brink of, or immersed within, the swirling waters which represent her muddied moral turbulence and will secure her release from a hated world."³³ In Dickens's mind, if not in the Victorian imagination at large, a drowned woman is a fallen woman. In these scenes, Dickens suggests that country lasses transplanted to the city become morally pestilential, ruinous to themselves and others. But the scenes show something else: David the writer standing contemplatively beside girls poised for drowning. Whether or not these endangered girls' "preservation . . . depended on a motion of [David's] hand," they certainly depended on a motion of Dickens's hand. Undeniably, in terms of Dickens's book sales, the Nells and Nancies, Alices and Em'lies, were more valuable when they "were not to be": that is, when pursued, defiled, decried, or beaten into

the ground. If the author is indicted in the market that swallows up maidens, there is an uncomfortable connection between the wolf, the author, and those devouring waters. Nevertheless, these girls were sacrifices that Dickens offered up uneasily. As early as 1850, Dickens entertains the possibility of writing a new ending for the lovely, doomed, working-class girlhood that had hitherto marked his *oeuvre*.

As Kotzin has noted, for all the many glancing references at Dickens's ruined "first love" throughout his novels, it is not until *Our Mutual Friend* that he dilated at length upon "Little Red Riding Hood."³⁴ I argue that the tale serves as a retrospection of poverty and girlhood in the Victorian imagination but most particularly in Dickens's own work. Early in the novel, Bella complains that the Wilfer's money is endlessly snatched by "the Monster that swallows up so much" when the family "want—Everything"; this is surely the same degraded "Monster" that swallowed Dickens's darling.³⁵ A wolfish avidity dogs the majority of Dickens's characters in *Our Mutual Friend*, and this image of devouring becomes a driving figurative force in the novel. Critics generally concur that the stomach was synecdochic for the body politic in Victorian England; many social critics (Dickens among them) saw the capitalist market as a devouring agent—like the wolf, cannibalizing its own society with bold rapine.³⁶ James E. Marlow argues that, after 1859, "the themes of orality, predation, and the translation of human flesh into economic gain—all metaphoric cannibalism—dominate his [Dickens's] fiction."³⁷ Importantly, metaphoric cannibalism in the respectable classes has analogues among working-class characters in the novel.

Catherine Gallagher has theorized that *Our Mutual Friend* marks an authorial trend wherein the physical condition of the working class metaphorizes the spiritual condition of the nation.³⁸ For Dickens, working-class hunger and the working-class body, in Gallagher's terms "[t]he theater of struggling food," symbolize marketplace economics.³⁹ Dickens's "attraction of repulsion" often centers in the utter physicality of survival, both as a harsh reality in itself and in its potential to represent society's relationship to a market economy. Gallagher underscores a common middle-class concern, "the fear that society is in danger of reducing human value to its most primitive biological needs." As she demonstrates, this was a fear that for authors such as Henry Mayhew clearly turned upon the act of devouring: "Everything is sacrificed . . . in the struggle to live—aye! and to live *merely*. Mind, heart, soul, are all absorbed in the belly. The rudest form of animal life, physi-

ologists tell us, is simply a locomotive stomach. Verily, it would appear as if our social state had a tendency to make the highest animal sink into the lowest." As Gallagher points out, however, the female stomach is indefatigably the most troublesome form of devolution for Mayhew: "As she stands there innocently selling strawberries, she is a visible and audible emblem of the sexual and economic exploitation that goes on behind doors and that has driven her into the street . . . they are guilty of embodying and hence raising to the surface of consciousness a ruthless struggle for marketplace advantage that Mayhew thinks is going on everywhere unseen. Mayhew returns often to this theme: in their vivacity, their lurid physicality, the intensity of their appeal to the senses, the costermongers *force* on the city dweller the ubiquitousness of the competitive marketplace."⁴⁰ For the sake of my own argument, it is vital that for Dickens, too, avidity is so often reducible to animalism. Gallagher's phrase "[t]he theater of struggling food" implies what becomes for me a vital *double-entendre* in Dickens's use of "Little Red Riding Hood." In one sense, poor women struggle for food; in another, they are themselves the food that struggles. As I have shown, "Little Red Riding Hood" also troubles the boundary between eating and being eaten. In *Our Mutual Friend*, Little Red Riding Hood stands in both for the working appetite and for those tailed by nightmarish esurience—the "locomotive stomach" unleashed upon the city. Together, of course, with many other figural counterparts, she prowls through Dickens's scenes of hunger.

Ultimately, we discover that there are not one but two devouring forces in *Our Mutual Friend*, two "[m]onster[s] that swallow . . . up so much." Gallagher has divided the novel according to the Ruskinian principals of wealth and "illth." In doing so, she reads Dickens's narrative as a sanitizing process, a movement from wet to dry: from the Thames, the site of pollution, the organic garbage of corpses, to the inorganic garbage of the dust heaps, which can then be transformed from the trash of commerce into "true golden gold," like Bella (p. 752). Thus John Harmon progresses from the river and the appearance of death, to "suspended animation" through the guise of Rokesmith, to life and wealth through the inheritance of the dust heaps.⁴¹ For Gallagher, then, since "the novel arranges its inquiry into the nature of wealth around the disposal of human remains," the river is the primary source of "illth," and "the heroism and horror of dragging bodies out of the river" is underscored; to Gallagher, the dust world is the place of transformations, the river the place of tragedy.⁴²

Gallagher's work is clearly crucial to my reading of the river in *Our Mutual Friend*; yet my examination of "Little Red Riding Hood" in the novel has led me to believe that the river is not merely an illthy sewer but also a powerful corrective force. The Thames winds through Dickens's *oeuvre*, binding it on either end, advancing and resolving plots, transporting certain characters, eliminating others. It therefore has both a narrative role and considerable authoritative powers. If the cannibalism of the market is entirely evil in Dickens's literary construct, the destructive force of the river has its uses, acting as an agent of death in the same sense as the wolf of Dickens's "Little Red Riding Hood." The language that surrounds the river attempts to resolve those very anxieties about the working girl and her appetite, and the authoritative powers of the Thames alter the course of the devoured-girl plot that Dickens himself set in motion. Whereas in 1847, the "restoration" of the girl was "no part of the English story," by 1865 it becomes clear that her salvation was, as he suggests, "familiar," lurking somewhere in his memory all along. In *Our Mutual Friend*, the Riding Hood of Dickens's far-off youth has, at first glance, been replaced by a nightmarish incarnation of herself in the grotesque body of a criminal. But I contend that Rogue Riderhood is fed to the Thames in an attempt to pull Red Riding Hood from its belly, restored and whole.

Riderhood is a self-proclaimed "[w]aterside character," and his link to Riding Hood is indivisible from his association with the river (p. 152). It is a bizarre, funny refrain of the Riderhood subplot to invoke the fairy-tale lass through this supremely ungirlish fellow. Lawyer Mortimer Lightwood first voices the kinship in an offhanded remark about "little Rogue Riderhood—I am tempted into the paraphrase by remembering the charming wolf who would have rendered society a great service if he had devoured Mr. Riderhood's father and mother in their infancy" (p. 405). Perhaps it is not only Riderhood's moniker that reminds Lightwood of the hooded heroine. Lightwood first meets Riderhood when he appears at his door, bearing not a basket of goodies but false witness. And like his namesake, Riderhood, too, wears a cap: "[The lights] showed the visitor to be an ill-looking visitor with a squinting leer, who, as he spoke, fumbled at an old sodden fur cap, formless and mangey, that looked like a furry animal, dog or cat, puppy or kitten, drowned and decaying" (p. 151). This cap resurfaces throughout the novel, identifying Riderhood as the riding hood does the folk heroine. It is variously a "drowned cap" (pp. 153, 155, 158), a "mangey cap" (p. 172), and

a "fur cap" (p. 443). Notably, his other emblematic garb is a red neckerchief, which he dons to trap Bradley Headstone. If Little Red's riding hood is a mantle of vanity, a wolf lure, a signal of her eventual bloody devouring, Rogue Riderhood's red scarf encircles his neck, pointing (like the drowned hat) to his demise. The police inspector, pulling up Gaffer Hexam's towline on the river (in which Hexam's body is tangled), also appears to comment upon the homophonic qualities of Riderhood's name: "I mean to have it, and the boat too," said Mr. Inspector, playing the line . . . 'Take care,' said Riderhood. 'You'll disfigure. Or pull asunder perhaps.' 'I am not going to do either, not even to your Grandmother,' said Mr. Inspector" (p. 174). In one sense, then, "Little Rogue Riderhood" is an inside joke for everyone but Riderhood himself; both Kotzin and DeMarcus argue that it is an ironic name for a man characterized by wolfishness, whose greatest talent is lying in wait for victims.⁴³ Indeed, like the fairy-tale villain, he attempts to appear in the guise of an "honest man" (for example, pp. 147, 154, and 157): the wolf in Alfred David's clothing.

But Riderhood is more than Dickensian catachresis. For *Riderhood* is swallowed in the end, and society is rendered a great service. What is more, the Thames performs this "service" regularly throughout the novel. I do not suggest that Riderhood equals Riding Hood, or that the Thames equals the "charming wolf" in any kind of mathematically precise fashion. Rather, I mean that when Dickens takes his characters alongside the water, he narrates this fairy tale, urgently evoking not only the story but also our remembrance of the story. In this way, Riderhood is, as Dickens says, a "paraphrase": a "rewording of something written or spoken by someone else, esp[ecially] with the aim of making the sense clearer; a free rendering of a passage."⁴⁴ Fairy-tale representation does not inhibit but rather clarifies Dickens's realism. Riding Hood moves *para phrase*—"alongside of, by, past, beyond" a "way of speaking."⁴⁵ She is, like the London surrounding her, "more than merely 'real'"; she is a way of speaking (and beyond a way of speaking) about working-class labor, hunger, and desire.

Rogue Riderhood epitomizes guilty, shameful work. He "gets his living by the sweat of an honest man's brow" but not, as it turns out, his own (p. 147). He embodies the perceived rapacity of the working classes, to warn of what the London poor can become when kept needy and ignorant. But I also contend that Riderhood serves as a scapegoat for other forms of work, other kinds of desire, so that other waterside characters may be stainless, may err and be redeemed, or, more poignantly, may stand silently without

name. What I mean is this: an edacious, audacious villain, he is the overt representation of a guilt that is not named in the novel but that is touched often with an uneasy hand. Hints of this guilt surface in the “found drowned” posters in the Hexam cottage, which advertise the deaths of young women: “This one was the young woman in grey boots, and her linen marked with a cross. Look and see if she warn’t . . . This is them two young sisters what tied themselves together with a handkecher . . . They pretty well papers the room, you see; but I know ’em all” (pp. 31–2). The particular shame of the young woman and sisters remains obscure; however, I believe that, as in *David Copperfield* (as well as in *Oliver Twist*, in *Bleak House* or in *The Uncommercial Traveller*), the riverside of *Our Mutual Friend* is haunted by the shades of desperate women. Even working-class women who escape sexual abuse, Dickens suggests, are beset by the degradation of poverty and the terrors of the workhouse. Betty Higden pauses outside London to contemplate the summons of the Thames: “from the bridge you may see the young river, dimpled like a young child, playfully gliding away among the trees, unpolluted by the defilements that lie in wait for it on its course, and as yet out of hearing of the deep summons of the sea . . . she heard the tender river whispering to many like herself, ‘Come to me, come to me! When the cruel shame and terror you have so long fled from, most beset you, come to me! I am the Relieving Officer appointed by eternal ordinance to do my work’” (p. 497). The passage echoes Martha’s haunted self-assessment at the Millbank riverside. The river has the narrative power to simultaneously signify a country child on its way toward “defilements” in the city and Death the Receiver of those very defiled children. The Thames thus endlessly repeats (among other stories) the story of Little Red Riding Hood “gliding” heedlessly through the woods and wolf who swallows her at her journey’s end. Betty’s determination to drown herself and Johnny reflects the horror of postindustrial London’s poor laws and reveals the unsheathed claws of capitalist society, when death in the “tender river” is preferable to life in the alms house: “No! Never for me, nor for the child, while there’s water enough in England to cover us” (p. 324).⁴⁶ Little Rogue Riderhood, the waterside character eventually “found drowned,” is both the iteration of what becomes of Little Red Riding Hood in the city and the sacrificial rogue for impoverished womanhood, behind whom stand the specters of other waterside characters—the woman in the grey boots, the sisters bound together with a handkerchief. These women, and not Bella, are the true victims of “the Monster

that swallows up so much when we want—Everything.” Dickens can have a great deal of mercy upon the nameless fallen with the aid of a whipping boy/girl.

In Rogue Riderhood's grotesque body, then, Red Riding Hood becomes an amalgam of wolf and girl, and I have explained that in its climactic moment, the “Little Red Riding Hood” tale blurs the same boundaries: “What big teeth you have.” “The better to eat you with.”⁴⁷ In a novel that takes every opportunity to dissolve categories, the collapsing distinction between wolves and girls becomes the fairy-tale re-articulation of *Our Mutual Friend*'s insistence upon mutuality. If Riderhood paraphrases devoured girlhood and devouring manhood, he performs the entire tale, a “free rendering of a passage” indeed.

Having suggested this, it is important to note that Riderhood is not the only male to be imbrued with shades of Red Riding Hood. The river claims a variety of waterside characters: Jesse Hexam, Bradley Headstone, Eugene Wrayburn, and John Harmon. All “Little Red Riding Hood” moments happen by the river: as with Riderhood, whenever a character becomes too devouring, he is swallowed by the wolf in its bed. I have cited Gallagher's theory that working-class hunger stood as an uncomfortable analogue to middle-class commercial desire; Gail Turley Houston draws similar conclusions regarding “oscillations between suppression of appetite and voracious desire in Dickens's male alter egos,” arguing that “this struggle is so intense that it must be acted out in a series of lower-class, carnivalesque characters or sequences.”⁴⁸ However, as Mary Poovey contends, there is no fixed integrity between these class distinctions in *Our Mutual Friend*. Instead, the effect of violent contact in the novel “is to locate difference inside of man, hence to imperil both the guarantee of virtue and the integrity of male identity itself.” In Poovey's model, “when one man can be ‘taken’ for another . . . then a man can be taken down with another like himself . . . This contradiction—the other is like me, the other is different—is essential to the economic and representational systems that *Our Mutual Friend* simultaneously participates in and resists.”⁴⁹ As Poovey “imperils” class boundaries, Gallagher troubles gender binaries. She argues that, because women in the novel are self-evidently items of exchange, naturally prone to and resistant toward commodification, “[m]en are knocked out, drowned, dried out, stored up and finally reanimated . . . so that women need not undergo any such self-alienation. The state of suspended animation is thus exclusively masculine in *Our Mutual Friend* because it is so naturally feminine.”⁵⁰ To at-

tach the disturbing elements of a fairy-tale girl to a working-class character such as Riderhood is to displace realities of work and the girl's body onto criminal masculinity. But to attach them to multiple male characters across the class spectrum is to create seemingly endless waves of guilty men transformed into headstones for fallen woman.

When Wrayburn, Lightwood, Riderhood, and the inspector set out in search of Gaffer Hexam, we are offered an especially haunting fragment of the tale:

Very little life was to be seen on either bank . . . and the staring black and white letters upon wharves and warehouses "looked," said Eugene to Mortimer, "like inscriptions over the graves of dead businesses."

As they glided slowly on, keeping under the shore and sneaking in and out among the shipping by back-alleys of water, in a pilfering way that seemed to be their boatman's normal manner of progression, all the objects among which they crept were so huge in contrast with their wretched boat, as to threaten to crush it . . . Not a figure-head but had the menacing look of bursting forward to run them down. Not a sluice gate, or a painted scale upon a post or wall, showing the depth of water, but seemed to hint, like the dreadfully facetious Wolf in bed in Grandmamma's cottage, "That's to drown *you* in, my dears!"

(pp. 172–3)

It is a warning, not only to Riderhood but also to Eugene Wrayburn and to Gaffer Hexam, too, already drowned and tangled in his own line. The passage points to the "luck" tied to Hexam's boat (for example, when Hexam is towing a corpse, Riderhood terms this "in luck" [pp. 15, 171, 173, 174]). His is a "dead business" in more ways than one: bodies are his capital, and he has paid for this unsavory work with his own, as the stain on his boat foretold. Like Riderhood, Hexam is a working-class metaphor for societal greed: the grotesque iteration of the grasping avarice that gnaws at the Lammles, Wegg, the Podsnaps, and Bella Wilfer. And yet, Hexam's death associates him not with the devouring wolf but with the devoured Little Red Riding Hood: an ignorant (but not innocent) victim of circumstances. Dickens's river scenes constantly symbolize the shame of other kinds of work: always associated with the defiled and rotting commercial piers she

frequented, the prostitute who plunged into the river was the very embodiment of dead business. How grimly appropriate that Eugene's vague, nameless sense of guilt and self-association with criminality eddies around this chapter, with his intentions to seduce Lizzie already taking shape in his mind. That's to drown *you* in, my dears.

Indeed, the "inscriptions over the graves of dead businesses" foretell the wrack of many wolfish business arrangements in the novel. Schoolmaster Bradley Headstone has "a manner that would be better described as one of lying in wait . . . Yet there was enough of what was animal . . . still visible in him" (p. 218). The "animal" resolves itself into more distinctly fairy-tale qualities when Headstone lies in wait for Lizzie like the wolf at the crossroads: "The best-looking among us will not look very well, lurking at a corner, and Bradley came out of that disadvantage very poorly indeed" (p. 386). Yet the clothes he dons mimic those of Riderhood, and the red neckerchief tags him covalently: to dress as Little Rogue Riderhood seals his fate and foreshadows the "dead business" their illicit partnership will become. Headstone's spontaneous, gushing nosebleeds also clothe him in red—a further link to Riding Hood as a sign of his ungovernable passion and a foretelling of his demise. In this way, Hexam and Headstone, both "pardners" at some point to Riderhood, perhaps represent those soiled by his contact; contaminated by the dark work at which he labors, they become echoes of his more overt paraphrase of Red Riding Hood (p. 15). It is therefore fitting that when Headstone and Riderhood are "found drowned" at the bottom of the river, Headstone lies atop Riderhood (p. 781). In addition to the marital union evoked, the pair embody the commercial signage at the city docks—Bradley an inscription, a headstone, over the grave of dead businesses.

The drowning of Riderhood, Hexam, and Headstone replays Perrault's invented ending in which the heroine remains entombed in the wolf's belly. It is, notably, with securely middle-class men that Dickens can begin to imagine making "the restoration of Red Cap" into "part of the English story." Eugene Wrayburn is another strange mixture of wolf and Red Riding Hood. Like Riderhood, he turns up on thresholds: "A man's figure paused on the pavement at the outer door. 'Mr. Eugene Wrayburn, ain't it?' said Miss Wren . . . 'You may come in, if you're good.' 'I am not good,' said Eugene, 'but I'll come in'" (pp. 233–4). Like Headstone, he lurks on street corners for Lizzie: "another figure loitering discontentedly by, and looking up the street and down it, and all about, started and exclaimed, 'Lizzie! why, where have you been?'" (p. 398). His

pursuit of Lizzie is lupine in its intensity (even he calls himself “a bad idle dog” [p. 234]). Yet at his own most wolfish moment, when he plans to seduce and to ruin Lizzie, he is attacked by Headstone and cast into the river. Baptism is only the most obvious metaphor for the action; when Lizzie pulls him out again, he is delivered from the Thames to the same effect as the Grimms’s Red Cap is pulled from the belly of the wolf—he emerges, sadder, wiser, and undoubtedly domesticated.

Even the ultimately triumphant heir John Harmon paraphrases “Little Red Riding Hood,” and thus it seems that, through characters’ repeated derangement from man to wolf to girl, Dickens muzzles male appetite of every kind, in every class category. During his long soliloquy, Harmon admits that he, like Bella, was lured by the Harmon fortune, noting that he was “attracted” “back to England” “by the accounts of . . . [his] fine inheritance” and that he was “mistrustful that . . . [he] was already growing avaricious” (p. 360). At precisely this pass, he is tricked into the complex identity theft that leaves him lying drugged in a room by the riverside. He hears the sound of his double, Radfoot, being murdered in his place: “I heard a noise of blows, and thought it was a wood-cutter cutting down a tree. I could not have said that my name was John Harmon—I could not have thought it—I didn’t know it—but when I heard the blows, I thought of the wood-cutter and his axe, and had some dead idea that I was lying in a forest” (p. 363). It is a strange analogy, unless we are on the watch for “Little Red Riding Hood.” As many have noted, the scene, so brimful of violence and apparent death, is actually the first sign of life in the Harmon money, the veritable turning of his fortune. Yet, far more subtly, the passage also points toward the avenging woodsman in the Grimm version, on his way to deliver Red Riding Hood from the wolf’s belly. For Harmon, the sound of the woodcutter signals redemption, a second chance at living without greed. Like Wrayburn, he must be submerged to be restored.

As with Riderhood, these men in one way and another carry the variant endings of “Little Red Riding Hood” in their bodies. DeMarcus recognizes that Dickens “seized on the tale of ‘Little Red Riding Hood’ as a metaphor for the modern world” but explains this argument with the generalization that “each individual, like Little Red Riding Hood, is a potential victim and faces Wolves at every turn, including the abstract figure of Death.”⁵¹ I have attempted to complicate this statement by taking account of the class and gender implications of the paraphrase. Following Poovey, I have demonstrated that the men in the novel who bear elements of both

wolf and Red Riding Hood become, concomitantly, metaphors for rapacity and for the effects of that rapacity upon society. The Red Riding Hoods that are punished in the novel are indeed men: defiled, desiring, and difficult to distinguish from wolves. However, Gallagher also contends that “all of the commodity-corpses, the discarded and suspended bodies in *Our Mutual Friend*, are male”; we have seen the women found drowned, and we know that this is simply not true—and yet it is an understandable and important omission.⁵² Wolfreys’s argument that London inhabits novels as much as novels inhabit London is useful here in seeing the river as an integrated part of the city. As in the texts Wolfreys analyzes, in *Our Mutual Friend* “London as both discourse and place of the imaginary flows . . . through the various narratives in question, barely containable, even as those narratives flow through the city.”⁵³ Wolfreys does not invoke the Thames specifically, but its “flow” is everywhere implied. Dickens sees the river not merely as synecdoche of defiled and defiling London; instead, the river, too, is a paraphrase, running not only alongside of but also beneath and beyond the narrative. It contains many other stories, the leaves of which may be fished out to line pockets. In other words, the women that paper the room of the Hexam house are the same women that paper this and all of Dickens’s novels: the stories of dead working-class women, from whom Dickens gleaned a living. Bodies have been Dickens’s capital too. The drowned and devoured men in the novel effectively serve to drown out the sound of other voices in the Thames, to cloak the shame of other waterside characters. In the case of Hexam, Headstone, Wrayburn, and Harmon, the effect is to surround them with the language, the rhetorical force of the tale, to imprint on them ghostly afterimages of Little Red Riding Hood. Riderhood cast in the river makes the impact—the other, repeated instances ripple out from his iconic center. Dickens tells the story, then tells it again, and again, and again, causing different men to step up and take the brutal beating for Red Riding Hood—rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief. As Poovey demonstrates, people are repeatedly both “taken in” and “taken for” in the novel.⁵⁴ When we understand this, it is perhaps less surprising that a man might be taken for a ruined girl: Rogue Riderhood is “taken for,” that is, taken in place of, Lizzie Hexam.

For among the throng of waterside characters and unnamed drowned in *Our Mutual Friend*, Lizzie is the endangered girl who is spared, the final incarnation of the Alices, Em’lies, and Marthas of Dickens’s imagination and the love who *is* to be. I contend that

Dickens needed to displace Riding Hood's association with dangerous knowledge, cloaked in her problematic class status, onto other working figures, in order for Lizzie to go unscathed.

Jenny Wren most clearly underscores the menacing association between Lizzie and Red Riding Hood when she erroneously imagines Lizzie and Riah in mortal opposition: "You are not the godmother at all!" said she. 'You are the Wolf in the Forest, the wicked Wolf! And if ever my dear Lizzie is sold and betrayed, I shall know who sold and betrayed her!'" (p. 562). If Lizzie is "a deep, rich piece of color" in Eugene's prying eyes (p. 166), that color is surely red. In contrast to her working-class exterior, there is a refinement about Lizzie that emphasizes her femininity, even as her labor undermines it. She, like the ill-fated Little Em'ly, was "born to be a lady."⁵⁵ Her accent, devoid of the working-class intonation of her father or even her more-educated brother, clothes her in borrowed class as surely as does Red Riding Hood's cloak, and makes her equally a target for wolves. Her employment—first as a seamstress, then as a factory girl—represents two of the most notorious jobs in nineteenth-century reportage in terms of their perceived irreconcilability to preserved virginity.

We are familiar with Dickens's panoply of tiny laboring heroines—Amy Dorrit, Charley Necket, The Marchioness, Jenny Wren herself—whose troubling, incipient womanhood is swept away by looking younger, smaller, weirder than their age warrants. The warping of childish innocence and beauty by premature care and labor is similarly evident in Jenny's twisted frame, the battle to survive plainly inscribed on her body. Unlike these abnormally small women, Lizzie's labor makes her physically strong, almost mannishly so when she dead lifts Eugene after his attack (woodsman to Eugene's damsel in distress). Lizzie's vitality makes her more endangered, perhaps even more dangerous, because it suggests that she might not deny her physical appetite. The "theater of struggling food" is also inscribed on her body, but its luxuriance in the face of the struggle means that her body betrays her in a way that Amy's, Charley's, or Jenny's cannot. Houston comments upon "Dickens's almost unquestioning acceptance of the need for female bodily economies to support male economies," but "believe[s] that in his middle and later novels Dickens increasingly displays the heroine's struggle to express and repress desire."⁵⁶ Lizzie's desire for Eugene lies very near the surface as she stands by the riverside with him; when, for the first time, Lizzie's restraint wobbles, she wavers from her path toward the jaws of the wolf.

And, however unwillingly, Lizzie is herself a waterside character in this novel, steeped, if not drowned, in Thames commerce, as her father reminds her: "As if it wasn't your living! As if it wasn't meat and drink to you! . . . How can you be so thankless to your best friend, Lizzie?" (p. 15). She shrinks from the river, from the bodies found there, from the posters of the drowned women on the walls, all of which have a special horror for her as a beautiful working girl. As Gallagher has demonstrated, the river is indeed "meat and drink" to Lizzie; she has unwillingly but inexorably internalized its commerce, its degradation, but also its hunger.⁵⁷ Hers is the terror of mimesis in "Little Red Riding Hood": the erasure of difference between wolf and girl mirrors the threatened elision between Lizzie and the woman in gray boots. It is the terror of any number of metaphoric falls—all that brings young working-class bodies to make the literal plunge into the Thames to end their shame. Dickens encourages this indelible tie from the outset: "Allied to the bottom of the river rather than the surface, by reason of the slime and ooze with which it was covered, and its sodden state, this boat *and the two figures in it* obviously were doing something that they often did, and were seeking what they often sought" (p. 13, my emphasis). As with Martha's corporeal conflation with Thames ooze, this introduction to Lizzie marks her as belonging to Dickens's ranks of threatened suicides.

Dickens asks readers to respond to other female characters with disgust, with amusement, or with sympathy: but he demands that we fear for Lizzie's safety. Though Bella decries the "Monster who swallows up so much," she herself is not in sexual jeopardy. Mercenary Sophronia Lammle is not bested by her husband, though he has "pervadingly too much nose of a coarse wrong shape, and his nose in his mind and his manners; too much smile to be real; too much frown to be false; too many large teeth to be visible at once without suggesting a bite" (p. 407). Canny, unsentimental, and unsentimentalized, Pleasant Riderhood from the outset declines "to be regarded in that boney light" (p. 90). Dickens equips these characters—self-avowedly part of the market economy, mature young women—with enough worldliness to deflect the wolves of the novel. Lizzie alone, grindingly poor, and dangerously lovely, appears defenseless.

DeMarcus notes the relationship between imagination and value for Dickens, citing Jenny Wren as one who "make[s] dolls' bonnets, turning scraps into something valuable through art and imagination," and allies Jenny's function to Dickens as narrator: "In classing people according to fairy-tale types, Jenny reveals

a self-reflexive Dickens, since such categorizing is the author's *modus operandi* in his fiction." However, DeMarcus concludes that Dickens's (and Jenny's) "solution" to "brutish humanity" lies in "using fairy tales to interpret life."⁵⁸ Yet, as I have shown, Dickens saw fairy tales themselves to be brutish. Of course, Jenny mistakes the villain, and the irony lies in the fact that Jenny, who is preternaturally sharp at suturing together social scraps into meaning, gets it so spectacularly wrong: wolfishness characterizes nearly every male in the novel *except* Riah. And this, I think, again demonstrates Dickens's underlying recognition that folklore resists the easy interpretation of its own happily ever afters. Fairy tales are not a "precious old escape" from "the world that is too much with us," not a series of "bright little books" as Jenny contends (p. 429), but powerfully current, a powerful current, a powerful currency. To read the value of imagination as psychic value only is to miss Dickens's subtle understanding of the relationship between nostalgia and commercial success: for Dickens, that horror brings value brings horror. Though Jenny mistakes the villain, she correctly identifies Lizzie as a consumable woman—by characters in the novel, but perhaps also by producers and purchasers of the novel.

Perhaps this is because Lizzie alone retains a nostalgic link to a childish past. Bella's early recollections are of beating her father with a bonnet; Pleasant's "own unfortunate experience" was of being "shoved and banged out of everybody's way, until it [she] should grow big enough to shove and bang" (pp. 345–6). But Lizzie's musings take her back to a time of unconditional love from a young boy named Charlie. Like many of her Dickensian predecessors—girls such as Nell, Amy, Biddy—Lizzie is a heroine bound to the sorrow and thrill of the lost past. Many critics have cited the wealth of protoliteracy and prereading that occurs in this novel. But it is useful to read Dickens's "first love" in this context, for the very fact that we do *read* Little Red Riding Hood is vital for Dickens's sense: in Propp's words, "folklore is the prehistory of literature." It is what one makes of that prehistory that appears to be important: Gaffer looks at the advertisements for the drowned and sees commerce. Lizzie looks at the "hollow down by the flare" and sees the hallowed past (pp. 38, 39, 77, 227, 343, 514). Nevertheless, a battle wages over Lizzie's education between a would-be seducer and a social climber, and Dickens makes little odds between them. It strikes me as significant that a boy named Charlie is unable to recognize that Lizzie has both raised him and raised him up: "literature soon abandons

the mother that reared it." Motivated by unhealthy ambition, he first attempts to educate the "nonsense" out of Lizzie (p. 393), then schemes to use Lizzie for his own self-aggrandizement, and finally casts her aside when she refuses his marriage plot. Here a working-class girl seemingly resists the authoritative machinations of another Charles, a boy who cannot recognize that he has betrayed his first love for social elevation. But she does not refuse the gift of literacy from Wrayburn, and it is a gift that comes with an unspoken price: the loss of that little brother, painful class consciousness, and the knowledge of adult desire. Indeed, literacy is represented as the path to seduction. And this returns us to the ways in which the fairy tale is material to Dickens's sense of his own novels. To bring Lizzie into literature, then, is to make her a dangerously public figure. Wrayburn certainly does so, but Dickens had been doing it for decades with his endangered and fallen female characters.

Riderhood's death, then, is doubly necessary. It is a reflection of the novel's oral fixations back onto fairy-tale subjects, and a burial of those subjects in the waters of the Thames. It is a displacement of the fairy tale away from the novel to make the novel respectable. Dickens demonstrates his uneasy navigation between the fairy tale and the novel when he attempts to sacrifice one kind of Little Red Riding Hood tale—the defiled, prostituted heroine; the commercial, grasping wolf—so that Lizzie might live within his pages. Dickens constructs a series of sacrifices so that no one can tempt Lizzie into a paraphrase of Little Red Riding Hood: so that Riding Hood ceases to move *para phrase*—alongside of Lizzie's way of speaking. Her father's death, Headstone's and Riderhood's deaths, Wrayburn's attack: all variations on the "Little Red Riding Hood" theme and all evidence that the river does indeed prove to be Lizzie's "best friend," neatly removing the threat to her virtue at extremely convenient moments. Of the many authorial voices and hands that operate in the novel—those of John Harmon, Jenny Wren, Silas Wegg, even Lizzie herself—the Thames is surely the most powerful of all.⁵⁹ The river follows the preservational motion of Dickens's hand: a tender wolf, a charming wolf, a mutual friend, washing away the "monsters" for the endangered girl. It is Dickens's attempt to redeem Little Red Riding Hood's lost girlhood, but paradoxically, this is only possible by sacrificing the fairy-tale heroine—destroying her before he had written a single word: "She was my first love. I felt that if I could have married Little Red Riding Hood, I should have known perfect bliss. But, it was not to be." Making Lizzie married—and, because married to

Wrayburn, middle-class—her womanly desire becomes sanctioned by Victorian standards for femininity. But for this reason she also becomes quite literally *Heimlich*: removed from the fantastic, dark corners of the woods, the river, the city itself, and placed securely in the bright realism of the middle-class home, where, in her book jacket, she earned a living wage for Dickens. Dickens's determination to pull Lizzie from the bottom of the river at once privileges the working-class girl and attempts to erase her entirely. In this way, in this late novel, the fairy tale becomes at once a monument and a scapegoat—telling in light of Dickens's vision of his first love as a ruined girl, a strange mixture of obscure dread and intense desire.

NOTES

I dedicate this essay to the memory of my professors Alan Dundes and Chris Brooks; their works profoundly influenced the shape of my own, particularly my work on Little Red Riding Hood in London. Their expertise and intellectual generosity are sadly missed.

¹ Charles Dickens, "A Christmas Tree," in *Household Words: A Weekly Journal* (21 December 1850): pp. 289–95, p. 291. See also Michael C. Kotzin, *Dickens and the Fairy Tale* (Bowling Green OH: Bowling Green Univ. Popular Press, 1972), p. 44; and Cynthia DeMarcus, "Wolves Within and Without: Dickens's Transformation of 'Little Red Riding Hood' in *Our Mutual Friend*," *DQu* 12, 1 (March 1995): 11–7, 11–2.

² I refer here to the work of those critics who examine nineteenth-century constructions of the past through various lenses. For nationalist politics, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), esp. pp. 1–46; and Katie Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1997), esp. pp. 3–36. For the cult of the child, see James R. Kincaid, *Child-Loving: The Erotic Child and Victorian Culture* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), esp. pp. 3–60; Carolyn Steedman, *Strange Dislocations: Childhood and the Idea of Human Interiority, 1780–1930* (London: Virago Press, 1995), esp. pp. 1–20 and 112–48; and Catherine Robson, *Men in Wonderland: The Lost Girlhood of the Victorian Gentleman* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton Univ. Press, 2001), esp. pp. 3–15. For studies in genre, see Susan Stewart, "Notes on Distressed Genres," chap. 3 in *Crimes of Writing: Problems in the Containment of Representation* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1991), pp. 66–101; and Helen Groth, *Victorian Photography and Literary Nostalgia* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2003), esp. pp. 1–51.

³ We might recall Nancy's vision of a watery end in *Oliver Twist* (1838), Inspector Bucket's search for Lady Dedlock on the docks in *Bleak House* (1853), or the prostitutes in the 1860 "Wapping Workhouse" "a headerin' down" to drown (Charles Dickens, *The Uncommercial Traveller* [London: Chapman and Hall, 1868], pp. 11–7, 12).

⁴ Philip Lewis, *Seeing through the Mother Goose Tales: Visual Turns in the Writings of Charles Perrault* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1996), p. 194. For a standard edition of the story, see Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, "Little Red-Cap" in *German Fairy Tales*, ed. Helmut Brackert and Volkmär Sander, trans. Margaret Hunt (New York: Continuum, 1985), p. 79. See also Perrault, *The Fairy Tales of Charles Perrault*, trans. A. E. Johnson (New York: Dover, 1969), p. 28.

⁵ Genesis 6:19–20 (KJV).

⁶ Steedman, p. 10.

⁷ Molly Clark Hillard, "Dangerous Exchange: Fairy Footsteps, Goblin Economies, and *The Old Curiosity Shop*," *DSA* 35 (2005): 63–86, 68.

⁸ William Wordsworth, *The Fourteen-Book Prelude*, ed. W. J. B. Owen (Ithaca and London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1985). The line numbers and wording are unchanged from those in *The Thirteen-Book Prelude* of 1805 (ed. Mark L. Reed [Ithaca and London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1991]).

⁹ Vladimir Propp, "The Nature of Folklore," chap. 1 in *Theory and History of Folklore*, trans. Ariadna Y. Martin and Richard P. Martin, ed. Anatoly Liberman (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1984): pp. 1–48, 14.

¹⁰ Groth, pp. 2, 6.

¹¹ Hillard, pp. 65–6.

¹² Dickens, "Frauds on the Fairies," *Household Words* (1 October 1853): 97–100, 100.

¹³ Harry Stone, in *Dickens and the Invisible World: Fairy Tales, Fantasy, and Novel-Making* (Bloomington and London: Indiana Univ. Press, 1979), and Kotzin are especially seminal in identifying and cataloging Dickens's use of various folk characters and plots. See also Carole G. Silver, *Strange and Secret Peoples: Fairies and Victorian Consciousness* (New York and Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1999).

¹⁴ See for instance Robert Alter, *Imagined Cities: Urban Experience and the Language of the Novel* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 2005), pp. 43–62; Robert Newsom, *Dickens on the Romantic Side of Familiar Things: "Bleak House" and the Novel Tradition* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1977); *Critical Reconstructions: The Relationship of Fiction and Life*, ed. Robert M. Polhemus and Roger B. Henkle (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1994), pp. 1–20; and Julian Wolfreys, *Writing London: The Trace of the Urban Text from Blake to Dickens*, vol. 1 of *Writing London*, 3 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1998), 1:3–30, 141–80.

¹⁵ Alter, pp. xi, 46.

¹⁶ Wolfreys, 1:5, 22.

¹⁷ Alter, p. 47.

¹⁸ Rick Allen has demonstrated that the phrase was coined not by Dickens but by Irish author John Fisher Murray. He notes that in Murray's writing, the phrase originally conveyed not "the strange allure of physically unsavory aspects of the city" but rather a different urban paradox: "the lonely crowd" ("John Fisher Murray, Dickens, and 'The Attraction of Repulsion,'" *DQu* 16, 3 [September 1999]: 139–59, 140). For Dickens, however, the sense remained one of visceral reaction to the urban space.

¹⁹ Newsom, p. 7.

²⁰ Alter, pp. 47–8.

²¹ A notable exception is Silver, who situates Dickens's use of the fairy in the larger context of a Victorian fascination with physiognomy (see pp. 117–48).

²² Dickens to Miss M., "3 April 1847," in *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, ed. Madeline House, Graham Storey, and Kathleen Tillotson, 12 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965–2002), 5:52. This letter is also quoted in DeMarcus, p. 12, and Kotzin, p. 35.

²³ The earliest folktale identifiable as part of the "Little Red Riding Hood" group is a story that folklorist Paul Delarue has entitled "The Story of Grandmother." Most folklorists believe that this was a version told primarily by women working in seamstress collectives in Nièvre, Forez, Velay, the Loire Valley, and the Alps. Village girls were often sent as apprentices to these women, and it is thought that, while seamstresses inducted these pubescent girls in the arts of housecraft, the stories they told taught other lessons, also designed to usher girls into the adult world (Catherine Orenstein, *Little Red Riding Hood Uncloaked: Sex, Morality, and the Evolution of a Fairy Tale* [New York: Basic Books, 2002], p. 81; and Jack Zipes, *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood*, ed. Zipes [New York: Routledge, 1993], p. 24). The tale's seventeenth-century origin has been widely accepted by folklorists, based upon the comparative study by Delarue in 1957 ("Le Petit Chaperon Rouge," in *Le Conte Populaire Français* [Paris: Érasme, 1957], pp. 373–83) and corroborated by Yvonne Verdier's study ("Grand-mères, Sie Vous Saviez: Le Petit Chaperon Rouge dans la Tradition Orale," *Cahiers de Littérature Orale* 4 [1978]: 17–55). See Alan Dundes, *Little Red Riding Hood: A Casebook* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1989), pp. 13–4.

²⁴ Zipes, "Epilogue: Reviewing and Re-Framing Little Red Riding Hood," pp. 343–83, 347.

²⁵ Orenstein, p. 38; Perrault, p. 28.

²⁶ Grimm, "Little Red Cap (1812)," in Zipes, pp. 135–8.

²⁷ Morna Daniels, "Little Red Riding Hood," *Electronic British Library Journal*, Article 5 (2006), pp. 1–8, 2. <http://www.bl.uk/ebj/2006articles/pdf/article5.pdf>.

²⁸ Orenstein, p. 57.

²⁹ Steedman, p. 19.

³⁰ Robson, *Men in Wonderland*, p. 14.

³¹ J. R. Planché, *Rodolph the Wolf: Or, Columbine Red Riding-Hood* (London: John Lowndes, 1818), p. 16.

³² Dickens, *David Copperfield*, ed. Jeremy Tambling (London: Penguin, 1996), p. 43; All subsequent references are to this edition of *David Copperfield* and will appear parenthetically in the text with the abbreviation DC.

³³ Robson, "Down Ditches, on Doorsteps, in Rivers: *Oliver Twist's* Journey to Respectability," *DSA* 29 (2000): 61–81, 75.

³⁴ Kotzin, p. 105n22.

³⁵ Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend* (London: Penguin, 1997), p. 50. All subsequent references appear parenthetically in the text. There is no acknowledged authoritative modern text for *Our Mutual Friend*, but Oxford World's Classics and Penguin offer the most recent editions (1998 and 1997 respectively), both of which are published from Dickens's first, two-volume edition of 1865. I have chosen the Penguin edition as being more widely available.

³⁶ This extended metaphor is pursued deftly by Gail Turley Houston in *Consuming Fictions: Gender, Class, and Hunger in Dickens's Novels* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1994), esp. pp. 1–13 and 38–60.

³⁷ James E. Marlow, "English Cannibalism: Dickens after 1859," *SEL* 23, 4 (Autumn 1983): 647–66, 655. Notably, Dickens's high-society scenes are staged during opulent dinners at the Veneerings, where the guests' endless gorging upon fine provisions is itself a thin veneer. It is in this setting that the wealthy middle classes tear into others' business with as much savagery as rapacity.

³⁸ Catherine Gallagher, "The Bio-Economics of *Our Mutual Friend*," in *Fragments for a History of the Human Body*, ed. Michael Feher, Ramona Naddaff, and Nadia Tazi, 3 vols. (New York: Zone, 1989), 3:344–65.

³⁹ Gallagher, "The Body Versus the Social Body in the Works of Thomas Malthus and Henry Mayhew," *Representations* 14 (Spring 1986): 83–106, 102.

⁴⁰ Gallagher, "Malthus and Mayhew," pp. 104, 101.

⁴¹ Gallagher, "Bio-Economics," p. 361.

⁴² Gallagher, "Bio-Economics," p. 360.

⁴³ Kotzin, p. 60; DeMarcus, p. 13.

⁴⁴ OED, 2d edn., s. v. "paraphrase, n.," 1a.

⁴⁵ OED, 2d edn., s. v. "para, prefix" and s. v. "phrase, n.," etymology.

⁴⁶ In drawing our attention to the toy Noah's Ark the Boffins buy for Johnny, Dickens insistently points to another lost innocence: "they would have hurt and tired him, but for an amazing circumstance which laid hold of his attention. This was no less than the appearance on his own little platform in pairs of All Creation on its way into his own particular ark" (p. 326). There is a striking return here of Charles Dickens's "own particular ark" and with it, the premature death of another child. Notably neither Betty nor Johnny dies by drowning, but the associations between wolfish devouring and engulfing waters here are too insistent to ignore, with Betty Higden laid in a grave within sight of the Thames, and with little Johnny exiting the world as another John Harmon looks soberly down upon him, remembering, no doubt, another virtual drowning (p. 507).

⁴⁷ I am grateful to David Simpson for pointing out to me that Riderhood's cap is, after all, a *fur* cap; Riderhood thus "dresses up" as Little Red Cap and the wolf simultaneously in physical as well as metaphysical terms.

⁴⁸ Houston, p. 155.

⁴⁹ Mary Poovey, "Reading History in Literature: Speculation and Virtue in *Our Mutual Friend*," in *Historical Criticism and the Challenge of Theory*, ed. Janet Levarie Smarr (Urbana and Chicago: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1993), pp. 42–80, 67–9.

⁵⁰ Gallagher, "Bio-Economics," p. 364.

⁵¹ DeMarcus, pp. 13–4.

⁵² Gallagher, "Bio-Economics," p. 362.

⁵³ Wolfreys, p. 18.

⁵⁴ Poovey, pp. 67–9. See also Audrey Jaffe, "*Our Mutual Friend*: On Taking the Reader by Surprise," chap. 5 in *Vanishing Points: Dickens, Narrative*,

and the Subject of Omniscience (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and Oxford: Univ. of California Press, 1991), pp. 150–66.

⁵⁵ Dickens, *David Copperfield*, p. 313.

⁵⁶ Houston, p. 60.

⁵⁷ Gallagher, "Bio-Economics," p. 352.

⁵⁸ DeMarcus, pp. 14, 15, 14.

⁵⁹ See also Jaffe, pp. 150–66 and Carol Hanbery MacKay, "Self-Creation," chap. 4 in *Soliloquy in Nineteenth Century Fiction* (London: Macmillan, 1987), pp. 86–117.